

Allied Neighborhoods Association

Mayor Schneider and City Council Members
City Hall De la Guerra Plaza
Santa Barbara, Calif. 93101
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February 1, 2010

RE: Plan Santa Barbara, General Plan Update, Hearing on February 11

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

Members of the Allied Neighborhoods Association have attended and given input over the past years at many community, board and commission meetings as well as workshops designed to inform residents of proposals for updating our city's General Plan. In discussions with members of our associations, we have found that **there is no consensus to support many of the proposed general plan revisions contained in this update.**

Many of the items contained in this plan appear to be excessive and do not reflect what were the major concerns of the initial public workshops. It can almost be characterized as an "exercise in excess". **Given that the economic situation has changed, it would appear that we need to focus on basics that are really needed and workable, and not venture into speculative ideas that are expensive and may or may not work.** We need to preserve the best of our community and limit the possibility of unintended consequences. We can best do this by being frugal in the number of changes that are made.

We have submitted oral comments and letters. We have encouraged local professionals to give presentations about the feasibility of proposals put forth by staff for our city's future. We have heard expensive out of town consultants propose high increases in density, likening our city to San Francisco and Los Angeles. We see our city as different from these cities and think that while these measures may work in large metropolitan areas, they are not workable solutions for our city. We need Santa Barbara solutions to respond to Santa Barbara concerns.

We are saddened to inform you that to date the majority of the issues we have raised have either been ignored or marginalized. **Staff has expressed little concern or even consideration of the limits of our resources (air quality, traffic congestion and road capacity, land limitations and water).**

Public discussion of whether proposed strategies and models will actually work under Santa Barbara conditions and vigorous public scrutiny of the validity of the underlying assumptions has been missing. If substantial modifications to the General Plan are to be imposed on our community, then the burden of proof of their efficacy is upon the city.

An illustrative example is, the often stated need for increased density in order to reduce the congestion due to workers commuting into our city. There is no factual study to determine whether these commutes are to our city, Goleta or beyond. We have never seen factual data as to how much additional housing the city proposes to affect commutes and what

will the consequences of this proposal. There had been no data to determine that we have the resources to support this proposed increase. We do not have any information on the capacity and money needed for the infrastructure improvements. The recent water supply report indicates a potential shortage of supply in 2013. How will this be addressed in light of the proposed increase in density? Will there be a significant effect on the number of commutes with the building of more units or will there just be new commutes to take their place? Will the density and type of housing proposed for construction be what the commuters can afford or want to live in? What will be the impact on local streets?

MODA

The MODA proposal raises the question of what is driving the proposal and is it really needed.

We already have the zoning that allows residential to be built along transit corridors. People do use alternative transportation. Is it necessary to increase density along the MODA routes to make alternative transportation financially sound? To reduce the parking requirement in an effort to make people take the bus could well result in adjacent neighborhoods being parked up with cars of the residents in the high density projects. While we understand that some do not want to have cars, how can you enforce this cars-free lifestyle on others? This appears to be an effort to change behavior that could well result in many negative consequences.

Policy Consistency

How does a proposal for the radical increase of density and population fit into our city charter and section 1507 which call for the city to live within its resources? Allied believes that the current residents of our city deserve to have their quality of life protected and not diminished by massive increases in density. They should not be forced to bear the burden of potentially expensive increased infrastructure.

Adaptive Management

We have major concerns with the proposed Adaptive Management, such as: Does the city have the technology and tools to make this work? How accurate can we determine cause and effect? Will we find we are out of resources after the fact?

Many now realize Chapala One was a mistake and didn't accomplish the intended goals, but now it can't be torn down even if it didn't work. Buildings will get built and population will get added, since no matter what the later feedback, projects can't be undone. We see Adaptive Management as an expensive undertaking that may or may not work with a high potential for unintended consequences.

Summary

As stated, the current proposed Plan Santa Barbara does not have the majority support in the community.

We therefore request that the council members consider the following possible actions.

1. Eliminate the concept of MODA since it is not needed.
2. Eliminate any increase in density which is greater than that provided in our existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinances.

3. Keep variable density in multi-family zones. Limit unit size while keeping the density in units per acre the same.
4. Remove the Inclusionary Ordinance.
5. Institute a dual density program. If the project is 100% affordable then the base density will be increased or doubled . If the project is market housing, it would be limited to the number of units under the base zoning.
6. Reexamine Adaptive Management. We prefer a predetermined maximum number of units based on known resources. The number of units to be built per year would be phased in relation to the existing known resources. Reports to the Council would be done on an annual basis.

There is a need for the council to act on these issues and give clear instructions to the staff before more time and funds are wasted. We are in an era of limits and we must make judicious use of our funds.

The Allied Neighborhoods Association urge you to consider our requests.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cathie McCammon, President, Allied Neighborhoods Association